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The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

● APRIL 1987



"God hath raised Jesus from the dead ; We are Witnesses."

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The Magazine of the Church of South India
APRIL 1987

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25 Years Ago!

The Church's call to Mission and Unity

The Church in Asian lands is a reality. It has taken root. And everywhere there are signs of deepening life, increasing influence, and widening boundaries. But there are also signs of weakness which need to be faced and which, unless they are faced, will weaken the Church's witness. To the extent that the Churches in Asia were evangelistically ineffective, the following are the main reasons. Evangelism is looked upon as a specialised Church-activity. It is not sufficiently realised that evangelism is a function of the whole life, the whole people of God. Evangelism is often thought of simply as engaging in certain so-called evangelistic activities such as open-air preaching, the distribution of Christian literature etc. In many places and to a great extent there is, in the Churches, a prevailing mood of accommodation to their non-Christian environment. This is because (a) there is a desire not to be different in the present period of national re-making; (b) there is the effect of the prevailing view in the country that religion is a private matter for each individual to decide; (c) there is the fear of arousing antagonism on the part of those in power; and (d) there is a general lack of conviction about the evangelistic imperative of the Christian faith, coupled with almost a total ignorance on the part of Christians of the beliefs and practices of other religions.

—Churchman, 1953

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The Vicarious Suffering



Church is called to be a suffering church—it suffers for others. It is a vicarious suffering. Jesus never wanted his followers be immuned from suffering. On the other hand he asked his followers to take the cross and follow him. What was his destination? The Calvary, the Death; Death which gives life to the others. Jesus lived in the midst of suffering but it was not a problem for him. He denied that the crown of life was pleasure. He recognised that such ‘suffering’ was necessary to the fulfilment of his redeeming vocation. Thereby he identified himself with the suffering lot of the world. He suffered exceedingly but made no moan. When he set his face towards Jerusalem, he set himself on the ‘narrow path’ which was full of sorrow and agony.

This was the way which Jesus showed to his disciples. The disciples, initially, were very reluctant to follow Jesus’ way, because they were cherishing their own whims and fancies. They thought of the kingdom and sought high positions. Some of them even went to the extent

of correcting their master about the concept of the kingdom. They did not understand the meaning of suffering. A few hours before the arrest of Jesus. Peter had boasted to Jesus, ‘Even if all fall away, I will not,’ thinking it was that easy to suffer along with Jesus. The Lord responded by telling Peter he would deny Him three times before the cock crowed. But Peter boasted more vociferously, ‘Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you’. In a matter of hours Peter let the accusation of a little servant girl frighten him into denying Jesus with a curse. When the cock crowed Peter remembered what Jesus had said and he went out and wept bitterly. That was the beginning of real manhood for Peter. This had been built into him at birth but it needed to be discovered, needed to be released from the false pride under which it was buried. Now he began to see his weakness, his pride and his false strength. True greatness comes by the road of brokenness and suffering. No man is really great who has not been broken before God. Peter learned to depend completely on God and follow the narrow,

suffering path. He humbled himself before God and bowed to the reign and rule of God in his life.

We are in the midst of the Lent. It is time for us to examine ourselves—our call and our mission. Where are we; how far we have sojourned and with what mission? It requires courage to move away from the safe place into the narrow and suffering spots, but we certainly need a gradual detachment from all false ties.

The basis of the church is not the social or economic equality or mutual co-operation but it is the divine call. The Church is not the result of human efforts. God has made us his people by calling us out of bondage, slavery and social oppression. He has been leading us out of the desert to fertile ground, out of slavery to freedom and out of captivity to liberation. The Church has been always moving. That's why it is called a 'pilgrim Church'. The temptation to settle in a comfortable oasis, however, has often been too great to resist and

frequently the divine call is forgotten and the unity broken. This requires a constant examination of anyone who drives the Church into a safe shelter or a cosy corner and a constant encouragement to look forward to what is to come. We are perfected by our sufferings. Let the suffering of each day convert our illusions into the prayer of a contrite people. This prayer is the song of the suffering Church. Sometimes it seems as if the Church is so busy with its projects and programmes that there is neither the time nor the mood to pray. But when prayer is no longer its primary concern and when its many activities are no longer seen as experienced as part of prayer itself; the church quickly degenerates into a club with a common cause but no common vocation. Our song then will have many odd notes. Let us not forget that the prayer is the language of the Church and we cannot afford to be dumb for too long a period.

—DASS BABU

Easter Message

MOST REV. I. JESUDASAN, *Moderator*

The journey through the Holy Week is complete. The promised resurrection has taken place. The Cross and death have been swallowed up by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Although we do not fully understand the mystery of the resurrection, we recognise that the most miraculous event in history has taken place and we cry out with joy along with Mary Magdalene, 'Rabboni' and with apostle Thomas, 'My Lord and my God'. The mystery of the resurrection is beyond our comprehension. As in the days of the apostles, there are people even today who are reluctant to accept this supreme miracle and people who rationalise it. But one thing is sure, a new life has come upon us and upon the world. Let us praise God.

Significance of Easter experience is so vast and world-changing. The new and victorious life which is the central message of Easter is recorded differently in the Gospels according to their distinct traditions. St. John records this message of new life in John 20:19-21. To his disciples who had been hiding in the upper room filled with fear, overtaken by grief and shattered hopes, the risen Lord gave the first Easter message. It was given in a dramatic and most significant manner showing his wounded hands and side, thus making the message ever bound to his life on earth and set it in motion by the power of his deathless new life. Let us listen to the message.

1. 'Peace be with you'

Showing his hands and his side, Jesus first said 'Peace be with you'. The new life brings peace because the living God is in ultimate control of what is happening in the world and in our life. We cannot be victims of karma and sin any more. Christ's sacrifice on the cross for our sin is the guarantee of our liberation and forgiveness. We are pardoned and justified. Even death must yield to this life-giving power. The Resurrection of Jesus not only guarantee our life in the future but secures for us the fullness of life here and now. Ultimate victory of goodness is vindicated. Reign of God's Kingdom begins to operate. Fear and anxiety have no place in our life. Peace has come. This peace we keep alive in our life when we re-enact this dying and rising with Christ in our lives daily.

2. 'I send you'

Showing his hands and his side, Jesus then said, 'as my Father has sent me even so I send you'. This means we have a task to do in the world. We have to take this world very seriously with all its problems. The wounds of Jesus inspire us to go deep into the world problems. God loved the world so much that He gave His Son. His Son, our Lord, in turn gave his life for the sake of God's world to give it abundant life. We are sent into the world to continue the mission of Christ till full manifestation of God's kingdom. Faith in the risen Lord is not a private religious cult. Every aspect of human life is challenged in the light of the values of the Kingdom. So every

believer is made an ambassador of Christ to the world and every congregation is set as a lamp on the stand. Wherever we are placed, we are called to live as agents of change. Our life will be judged according to the measure of suffering we undertake for the sake of God's Kingdom in the world.

3. 'Receive the Holy Spirit'

Showing his hands and his side, thirdly Jesus breathed on his disciples and said 'receive the Holy Spirit'. Through the risen Lord, we receive God's spirit promised for the new age. By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit God transforms us to the risen glory of his son Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 3:17). 'God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by His power' (1 Cor. 6:14). The spirit teaches us the things of God revealed in Jesus Christ and helps us to discern God's purposes in changing situations of our life in this world. The spirit enables us to apply the love of God shown in Christ, in various living conditions. The spirit makes us bold to take a stand in times of testing and persecution. He convicts us of our sin and leads to repentance and renewal. He gives new insight and vision that we may be 'the light of the world' and 'the salt of the earth'. He comforts us when we are in trouble and keeps us in God's peace. Holy Spirit is the special gift of God given to us on the Easter Day through the risen Lord. Above all our life is eternally attached to Jesus Christ to his risen glory and to God's kingdom. In the spirit we learn what it means to believe, worship and obey the living God.

4. 'Forgive or retain the sins'

Showing his hands and his side Jesus finally said: 'If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained'. The forgiveness offered by our Lord on the cross to all mankind needs to be announced by His disciples throughout the world. The risen Lord has given us authority to cast out demons whose rule he overthrew on the cross (Mk. 3:15, 6:7, John 12:31). We have given the power to discern and challenge such forces of evil that destroy God's image in man and work against God's kingdom. We are called to demolish work of satan and proclaim God's forgiveness so that all such forces may yield to the conquest of new life. This authority we have to understand in the light of the wounds of Jesus. We are called to look at those places and persons where wounded Jesus stands. We have to listen to his cries. It should be our constant engagement to lift people from inhuman conditions and situations where God's forgiveness and new life are always ready to be offered: And we have also to exercise our discernment to condemn those things which do not fit in with the new life in Christ. May this Easter be a day of receiving peace from the risen Lord and accept his commission to go into the world with the power of the Holy Spirit breathed on us and with authority to announce God's forgiveness that the world may believe that Jesus lives yesterday, today and for ever.

The Foolish and the Weak: Some Thoughts on Mental Handicap in India

REV. DONALD H. MASON*

The first of the miracles of Jesus was the healing of a 'demonpossessed' man, and several other miracle stories are about such people. For many centuries thereafter people, lacking our understanding of mental health, explained the bizarre behaviour and strange appearance of some as the result of possession by evil spirits or a divine visitation. Today we know that the people Jesus dealt with were either mentally ill or mentally handicapped. Yet, although we have progressed to this extent, these unfortunate people are still the object of much fear and superstition and are among the most rejected and neglected in society.

Part of the difficulty is that the distinction between mental illness and mental handicap is by no means always understood. Yet it is as clear as the distinction between physical illness and physical handicap. Mental illness is the result of a failure, it may be for one of a number of reasons, to cope with the strains and tensions and demands of life in family or community, or within ourselves. It may take the form of depression or anxiety, or in more serious cases of a neurosis or psychosis. Most of the violent and anti-social behaviour which had given rise to the term 'madness' occurs in mentally ill people. Yet, like physical illness, mental illness can usually be treated and cured. Counselling, therapy and drugs may all play a part in restoring the patient to full mental health again.

Mental handicap, on the other hand, is, like physical handicaps such as blindness, deafness, being crippled, a condition which cannot be cured. In most cases its causes are in fact physical damage to the brain as a result of congenital deficiency, malnutrition in childhood, illness or accident. The person so handicapped will not develop normally. He/she often cannot learn even simple actions or lessons, is unable to look after her/himself, and cannot live a normal life. She/he will be almost totally dependent on parents and others to live at all. Some are so retarded as to need custodial care and nursing, but most are not violent and are indeed simple, gentle and friendly people, far removed from any association with madness. As with most physical handicaps they benefit from special education and care and can, with shelter and support, become more independent, able to contribute to life and enjoy it. But this depends on the readiness of society to

understand, accept and provide for them. Unhappily this is often not the case, and it is symptomatic of the situation in India that mental handicap and mental illness are still dealt with under the Indian Lunacy Act of 1912 which makes no distinction between them!

Our mental abilities are generally measured by an IQ test which relates us to a norm of 100. Mental handicap is a range of ability below the norm. Around the world the incidence of handicap is between 2% and 3% of the population. In India this calculation suggested that between 14 and 21 million people suffer some degree of mental retardation and need help. Around the world 4 per 1000 of the population suffer a severe degree of handicap. This means that in India there are between 2½ and 3 million severely retarded people. Since one factor in the birth of handicapped children is malnutrition, a condition endemic in much of India, the odds are that the handicapped birth rate is significantly higher, though against this must be set the also higher rate of infant mortality. Whatever the figure it represents a terrible problem, and since a handicapped child is also part of a family, on which it has a major impact, the social problem associated may involve anything between 50 and 100 million people!

In 1979, a growing awareness of this problem led the Government to act. The Director General of Health Services and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences, with the co-operation of the World Health Organisation set up 'The Expert Group on National Planning for the Mental Handicapped of India'. The Group later issued a full Report (IND MNH 002/D. from W.H.O., Regional Director, S.E. Asia Office, World Health House, New Delhi-110 002) which filled in details of the stark picture painted above.

The Report reveals that provision of services for mentally handicapped people is measured in tiny fractions of the need. Bangalore, one of the country's great cities, and in many ways a centre of progress, is estimated to have 100,000 mentally handicapped people. Thirteen homes and special schools provide for just 400 of them. Only four medical colleges in the country have mental retardation clinics. Most doctors are ignorant of the diagnosis, treatment and needs of the mentally handicapped and their families. Such diagnostic, medical, therapeutic and social services at there are, are confined to a few cities. Support services—educational, vocational,

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residential—are rare. The figure given for the national provision of day centres is 150 serving 10,000 people. Training centres for staff are few. Sheltered workshops provide inadequate, boring and repetitive tasks. Residential provision is categorised as dismal and marked by overcrowding and a lack of activity which allows residents to vegetate. Those capable of development quickly deteriorate. Services are under-staffed, under-funded, and ill-equipped.

As far as Government is concerned this problem is divided between the Ministry of Health which has responsibility for diagnosis, treatment and guidance, and the Department of Social Welfare which deals with education, training and rehabilitation. Both agencies work through the States' Ministries of Health and Social Welfare. Unhappily the Report referred to above appears to have been shelved. Such small progress as has been made is due to the emergence of a number of voluntary organisations. Over the years these have stimulated interest, sponsored research, arranged national conferences and generally tried to raise the level of awareness and understanding of the problem. Yet the Expert Group could say of public opinion on the subject that it still equates mental handicap with insanity, is completely ignorant of the causes of handicap or the potential of handicapped people, and that it considers effort to relieve the situation a waste of money! Yet, again, 75-80% of those affected are only mildly so and the provision of services not only helps them and their families but adds to the human resources of the country and, some makes economic sense.

For the more severely handicapped the outlook is grim. Poverty, ignorance and superstition compound their handicap. These are often treated with less consideration than animals. They have been known to be tied up outside the house and fed on scraps and leavings. It seems likely that many die of neglect and exposure. In my recent visit to India I found one small unit in a Christian hospital which housed 21 children. They slept in two wards and their beds were side by side from wall to wall with no space between and access only over the end of the bed. A small staff were valiantly trying to provide care and education with very limited resources and an obviously low priority in the budget of the institution. Another small group was being run, by a young Christian, in a rented house, for twelve young men between the ages of 13 and 22 years. His wife works to support the home and project, for which they constantly have to beg support from wherever they can find it. Yet this is a human

problem larger in scale and more destructive of human life than leprosy into which the State and the Churches have poured so much money.

It is easy when speaking of a problem such as this to forget that it is human beings with whom we are concerned. They are like the rest of us, but are deprived, through no fault of their own, of the full physical and mental health most of us enjoy. Some suffer defects of speech. Others lack control of their bodies. Many are disfigured and unnatural to look at. Often they appear simple, foolish and absurd. Mostly they are doomed to a life of inactivity. Generally they are stared at, laughed at, ridiculed, rejected—symptoms of the fear and anxiety they generate in us. Or, they are the objects of a patronising pity and condescension which are equally wounding for them.

In truth however it is we, who call ourselves normal, who are the problem. It is we who feel the anxiety that breeds the ridicule. It is we who feel the superiority that allows us to patronise. It is we who fail to treat them as the human beings they are, as they are, and for what they are, children of God.

For what they are? Children of God? Yes! For they are often something special. They are defenceless and without guile or worldly wisdom. They are simple, not pretending to be other than they are. They have a joy in simple things. They are warm and respond with sincerity and trust to any approach. They know how to laugh and sing and dance uninhibited by convention or self-consciousness. They are sensitive to others and mutually supportive. They have a natural instinct for worship and for prayer. We, for all our veneer of education, culture and sophistication, have much to learn from them. The world needs what they can give.

Jean Vanier, the Roman Catholic priest who founded L'Arche, an organisation for the handicapped which has five communities in India, calls for 'a respect and love for the weak and foolish of society, just because they are weak and foolish'. Why, we may ask does God allow some of his children to be so handicapped? Perhaps it is, as Paul suggests in 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, because he needs them to confound our pride and superiority and self-sufficiency, and bring us nearer to him as we identify ourselves with them. It seems to me to be time that the Church, not only in India, but around the world began to respond to the call of God in the foolish and the weak.

Mission in Christ's Way—III

BISHOP LESSLIE NEWBIGIN

Jesus came and said to the disciple, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and made disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and I am with you always, to the close of the age' (Matt. 28:18-20).

When people speak of 'The Great Commission', it is usually to this text that they refer. It has, at least in Anglo-Saxon Protestant circles, come to be seen as the essential 'mandate for mission' and has often been taken in isolation from the other texts was never used as the basis for missions in the past 200 years. Taken in isolation from the other passages which we have been studying it could seem to validate a sort of triumphalist style of mission which accorded all too easily with the political and economic expansion of the European powers during this period, an expansion with which missions were (inevitably) so much connected. It is indeed necessary that we should take it along with the other texts. If we take it alone, and see mission as essentially obedience to a command, then mission becomes part of the law rather than an expression of the gospel; it becomes a burden to be carried rather than a joy to be shared. It becomes essentially our programme, rather than a work of the Spirit in which we are caught up.

Yet if we look carefully at this text we find that, though it gives a distinct emphasis (as the other two do) it does not contradict the others. It begins with a great shout of victory reminiscent of the 93rd Psalm. All the waves and the billows have gone over the head of Jesus, but 'mightiest than the thunders of many waters, mightier than the waves of the sea, the Lord on high is mighty'. Jesus reigns. We may compare this with the closing verse St. Luke's gospel where we read that the disciples returned to Jerusalem, 'with great joy'. The mission begins with an explosion of joy, triumphant joy. The tomb is empty. Jesus lives. Death and hell are robbed of their victory. Every other authority, all the powers are disarmed. All authority is given to the crucified and risen Jesus. In him God reigns.

When we know this, we cannot keep silent about it. We can, if we like; treat it as just one of the varieties of religious experience. But then we do not believe it, and it is better to say so frankly. If we believe that it is true, we shall not be able to keep silent about it. It

is not that we speak because someone one has ordered us to do so. We would indeed be guilty if we kept silent about something of such tremendous import for every human being. But we do not speak simply because we are ordered to do so. We speak because we must, but the constraint is an inward one, not an external one. 'Woe is me if I do not preach the good news'.

And the good news can no longer be confined to Israel. Israel has been chosen to be the bearer of it, but not to be the sole beneficiary of it. It is for the nations, those hither to outside the covenant of Abraham. The promise of prophets and psalmist is now to be fulfilled at least, and the pagan nations will come to walk in the light of the Lord.

But what will this involve? What does it mean to 'disciple the nations'? Three dangers have to be recognised here.

1. The first is that we should take it to mean that 'the nations' are to become like us. It is to think: 'We are God's people living under God's law.' If the nations are to be disciplined that must mean that they become like us, keeping the same laws, the same customs, the same appointed feasts, the sabbath and—above all—the fundamental law of circumcision. Is it not written, 'Any uncircumcised male... shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant' (Gen. 13:14)? The New Testament tells us the story of how the Church had to learn that this is not what 'disciple the nations' means. The most vivid example is the story which we often call 'the conversion of Cornelius', but which could also be called 'the conversion of Peter'. Look at Peter before he met Cornelius and listen to the way he talks: 'God forbid, Lord, I have never eaten anything unclean'. He is a pukka Brahmin and the idea of mixing as an equal with pagans is unthinkable. A few hours later in the house of that pagan Roman soldier, he has to admit with astonishment that his heathen family has become part of the same family of God that he belongs to. And the change does not end with Peter. You remember what followed: Peter was brought before the General Assembly and charged with conduct forbidden to God's people. Peter

simply tells the Assembly what happened, and we read that the whole Assembly kept silent (quite a miracle in itself) and then said, with evident astonishment, 'Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life' (Acts 11:18). It is not just that Cornelius is changed; it is that the Church is also changed.

This means that if we are faithful in mission we must recognise that Christianity is something that is always changing. I would not say, as has been suggested, that we have to 're-invent the Gospel' in each new generation, for the Gospel is news of what has been done once for all. I would rather say that the Holy Spirit, through the faithful witness of the Church to the Gospel, teaches the Church new things and brings it—through its successive missionary encounters—into the fullness of the truth. That is the promise spelled out so clearly in the 15th and 16th chapters of St. John. Here is the real difference between proselytism and evangelism. I have taken part in many discussion on this, and have often felt at the end that the only conclusion reached was: 'Evangelism is what we do; proselytism is what they do'. But it is possible to go beyond this. In proselytism I open the door to bring another into my enclosure and expect that in due course he will become like the rest of us in the enclosure. In true evangelism we give from for the Holy Spirit, recognising that it is he alone who converts, to use both us and those to whom we bear witness to bring about something new, something by which both parties were changed, and something comes into being which is a little more adequate as a sign and foretaste of Christ's universal reign. The acid test is always this: Is the evangelist ready to be changed by the encounter, or does he look for change only in the other party?

2. That is the first danger. We have to affirm, with the Nairobi Assembly of the WCC, that Christ does not make carbon copies; he makes originals. But we have also to be on guard against the opposite danger, the idea that 'disciplining' does not itself involve any change in behaviour. Dr. McGavran and the 'Church Growth' school of missiology which he leads, affirms that God respects the variety of human cultures (which is surely true) but carries this affirmation the point where it seems that culture is being absolutised. Human society, he says, is a vast mosaic of distinct cultures, and the gospel must be so proclaimed that it finds its appropriate place within each culture and that accepting Christ does not involve a break with culture. This is, of course, the theological basis for *apartheid* in South Africa. I do not suggest that Dr. McGavran is a defender of this practice, but he insists that the text which we are studying makes a distinction between 'disciplining' and 'teaching'; that the proper business of mission is become absorbed in what McGavran calls 'perfecting' which—in effect—often means co-opting the new converts into the culture of the missionary through long processes of education, technical training and the teaching of western

theology. There is an important element of truth in this criticism of traditional western missionary policies, but McGavran's exegesis of the text will not stand scrutiny. It is clear in the original Greek that 'disciple the nations' is the main verb, and that 'baptizing and teaching' are adverbial clauses defining with what 'disciplining' is. Teaching and disciplining are

not two separate activities. Disciplining is not merely a change of religious allegiance with no ethical implications. And those ethical implications may well involve challenging elements in the traditional culture. Disciplining *includes* 'teaching them to observe all that I have commanded' that is not an additional extra.

But what is it that Christ has commanded. It is not new law. It is that which is the end of the law, in both senses of 'end': it achieves what law intends but does not achieve and so removes law from its traditional place. It is not something imposed by the missionary. What it is, is seen in the ministry of Jesus. When he 'discipled' Levi the tax-collector, Levi responded by giving a feast; being a disciple meant sharing his joy with his friends, disreputable as they were. When Zacchaeus became a disciple, he responded by freely and joyfully giving away his ill-gotten gains. It was not, of course, that giving away his money made him fit for the Kingdom of God. It was that the utterly free, gracious and astonishing action of Jesus in going as a guest to the home of this much-hated man caused Zacchaeus to want to give his money away. Disciplining does not mean the imposition of a new code of law; but it certainly means a new kind of life, a kind of life which is almost certain eventually to call aspects of culture into question.

3. To indicate the third danger of which we must be aware let me start by asking a question: How seriously are we to take the fact that the object of the verb 'disciple' is not individual people, but 'nations'. Of course we must recognise that 'nations' does not mean 'nation states' in the modern sense. To think so would be anachronistic. In the perspective of the Bible it means all the communities outside of Israel, broadly understood as ethnically and culturally defined groups. It would be a mis-reading of the text to construe it as referring to 'nations' in the modern sense, and not also to tribes, castes, clans. It is also to be noted that while the object of disciplining is 'the nations' (ta ethne, neuter). The object of baptizing and teaching is not nations but persons (*autous*).

Dr. McGavran understands 'disciplining the nations' to mean that it is the various tribes, clans, castes and other ethnically and culturally defined groups as such which are to be discipled. The Gospel is to be communicated to each in its own idiom, and the result will be an ethnically/culturally defined Christian community distinct from other Christian communities and retaining its own distinctive ethnic and cultural characteristics. In this way, says McGavran, the Gospel can spread rapidly everywhere since it will not require a break with family and culture. This is the secret of rapid Church Growth, for 'God accepts human culture'.

I do not think this can be accepted. Culture is to be respected but not absolutized. In no sense of the word 'nation' are these ethnic and cultural groupings eternal. They are part of an ever-changing human world. (It is, I think, significant that of all the 70 'nations' into which the ancient Hebrews thought the human family was divided—see Genesis 10—not one remains to this day except the family of Eber. However scandalous it may seem to us who are Gentiles, the sons of Eber have a unique and abiding place in God's ordering of history). Human culture is to be acknowledged and respected, but not absolutized. This text will not bear

the meaning which Dr. McGavran (and others before him) have read into it. In the contact of the Bible as a whole, we must say that 'disciplining the nations means bringing those who were outside the family of God into one family, in which unity does not mean uniformity and diversity does not mean division, in which love and freedom are the only absolutes. It is surely very significant that St. Paul, who fought so passionately to ensure that Gentiles should not have to become 'carbon copies' of the Jews in order to be part of the family of God, insisted with equal passion that Jews and Gentiles must live together as a single family in the Church. The transcendent lordship of Christ is made manifest precisely in the fact that our manifold ethnic and cultural diversities, without being destroyed or devalued, are nevertheless transcended in that new reality which is given to us in Christ through the spirit.

At the end of our text we are reminded again that the fundamental reality is not a command but a promise: 'Lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age'. It is the presence of a new reality in the life of the world, the presence of the risen Lord himself, which is the dynamic of mission. It is he alone who can draw all people to himself (Jn. 12:32). If we could always remember that, we might spend less time in arguing with each other about missionary methods, and be more ready to acknowledge the diversity of gifts through which the Holy Spirit bears witness to Christ. Let me conclude with a story, one of many that I could tell, which vividly illustrated this point for me.

Thirty years ago, when I was bishop in Madurai, I had a visit from a village of which I had never heard, to say that there were 25 families wishing to be baptized, and would I come and baptize them? I looked the place up in the map and found that it was actually not in my diocese but a few miles over the border in the Trichy-Tanjore Diocese. I wrote to the bishop there, told him of the request, suggested that it must be the result of evangelistic work by members of the Church there, and invited him to deal with it. He replied that he had never heard of the place and that he knew of no evangelistic work in that area, and that I had better to there myself I did so, and after a day in the village was able to piece together the story behind the request. It was drama in four acts.

Act I saw the visit of a team of development workers who helped them to put down a well, install an electric pump, and get a clean water-supply. The leader of the team was a Christian engineer, a good man but not much of a communicator. He told them he was a

Christian, and they was that he was a good man. That was all. End of Act I.

Next, a few months later, one of the villagers went to the neighbouring town to do some purchases and a colporteur sold him a copy of St. Mark's Gospel. He began to read it, became interested, and started discussing it with his neighbours who gathered round to hear him read. End of Act II, with no visible change.

Some months passed, and an independent evangelist paid a visit to the village. As is the manner of his tribe, he preached a fiery sermon, stayed the night in the village, and left behind a tract which said: 'If you die tonight, where will you go? The villagers decided that the matter was more serious than they had thought and that further investigations were called for. So (and this is Act IV) they sent word to a village five miles away where there was a Christian congregation. 'Will you please tell us?', they asked, 'What is all this about this man Jesus?'. It happened that one of the members of the congregation (all of them landless labourers) had an accident and was unable to do field work. The congregation decided to send him over to the other village, to spend a month with them answering their enquiry.

The result was a group of 25 families as ready for and as eager for baptism as any that I have seen. I baptized them forthwith.

The point of the story is obvious. If you had assembled the engineer, the colporteur, the evangelist and the collie for a seminar on missionary methods, they would probably have disagreed with each other—perhaps violently. Unknown to each other, each had done faithfully the work for which the Holy Spirit had given the equipment. The strategy was not in any human hands. And I, as the bishop, was kept right out of the action until the moment came when I was given my duty to do.

I tell this story because it is a good example of what is constantly happening. Perhaps it is unfortunate that the history of missions is too often written by missionaries. They over estimate their role. It is the Holy Spirit who is the primary missionary; our role is secondary. Mission is not a burden laid upon the Church it is a gift and promise to the Church which is faithful. The command arises from the gift. Jesus reigns and all authority has been given to him in earth and heaven. When we understand that, we shall not need to be told to let it be known. Rather, we shall not be able to keep silent.

(Concluded)

Church in Service to the World

This item is excerpted from a background paper prepared for the world consultation 'Diakonia 2000—Called to be Neighbours'.

...Theological reflection on the churches' responsibility for service to the world is fairly diverse. In North America some churches are trying to bring about critical awareness against equating capitalism, or the so-called free market economy, with Christianity. On the other hand, there is a growing tendency to define justice in terms of 'social darwinism': the poor deserve their lot! Migrant workers in Europe, often the poorest of the poor, are experiencing growing hostility. Some Christians fight for the rights of these workers, others reason that diakonia is limited to those who are baptized and 'God is the god of the rich'. Is there a connection with growing xenophobia?

Involvement in advocacy and social and political action is controversial within and outside the churches. Frequently Romans 13 serves as a point of reference to limit the churches, critical leaders and lay persons to their spiritual duties. Churches in the countries of the third world meet with similar reproaches when they speak up against tribalism, corruption and oppression. On the other hand there are also church leaders who themselves claim to be the poor to justify that inter-church aid and cooperation be limited to the church and not translated into service and shared with the community. This attitude is encouraged by bilateral relationships if they do not at the same time emphasize community relatedness and responsibility.

New thinking like the theology of liberation has brought about considerable changes toward advocacy and community action. This highlights the fact that witness, service, advocacy are dependent and energized by their theological understanding. Theological understanding is also at the heart of the witness and service of the congregation. As human beings are the chief

factor in development, it matters what the congregation is guided by, feels and expresses. The people of God are important through their attitude towards community involvement, social change and justice. They may serve as 'salt' and 'light' in society. Whether they do so will depend on how they are willing and able to translate their theological understanding into responsible action.

The church, from its position in society, may find itself frustrated in translating its theological base into appropriate action. A nationwide (state) church has often more means to express its message than a small minority church. Given the realities how do we witness to God's love? How far do we respond to the far-reaching challenges confronting us? The churches have found many ways to do so. In the ecumenical movement they realized mutual support by acknowledging deficiencies and needs and trying to share gifts. The Church of England needs the wisdom of the Caribbean churches to help it care and share with its new neighbour. The German churches need the experiences of the Coptic Orthodox Church with her participatory diakonia involving all members of the congregation for renewal of her services. The churches in the north will continue to share their resources with those of the south but they may try to do so in a new quality and in mutually acceptable ways.

Sharing, healing, individual caring will always remain part of diakonia. But can the churches restrict themselves to these areas?

If solidarity with the poor is more than lip service, the churches have to struggle for a composite approach. The immediate, material cooperation must be complemented by being involved with the world bringing to bear Christian perspectives of justice, peace and the integrity of creation, internationally and locally.—*EPS.*

WELCOME

ACCORDED TO OUR OVERSEAS PARTNERS

The Moderator Jesudasan at the very beginning of the Working Committee extended a warm welcome to all the CSI-RMC Members. The Working Committee, together with the CSI-RMC Members, was held on 16th and 17th of March '87 on the picturesque shores of Mahabalipuram, a welcoming change of venue.



REV. GORDON SHAW

Rev. Gordon Shaw, The British Council of Churches, London, responding on behalf of all the following members who were present :

CSI-RMC Members

Dr. Newton Thurber—Presbyterian Church in USA
Mrs. Connie Thurber—U.C.B.W.M., USA
Mr. Eric Gass—U.C.B.W.M., USA
Rev. Dr. Christopher Durai Singh—CWM, London

Dr. A. M. Mook—Reformed Church in Netherlands
Mr. H. Mintjes— " " "
Rev. Robert Scheuermeier—EMS, West Germany
Dr. Glen Bruggers—R.C.A.—USA
Rev. Winston Ching—Episcopal Church in USA
Mr. Charles Den Blaker— " " "
Mr. Malcolm Warner—C.M.S., London
Rev. Bill Murison—Church of Scotland
Rev. S. M. Jacob—M.C.O.D. England
Mr. Hanspeter Finger—HEKS, Switzerland
Rev. Terry Brown—Anglican Church in Canada

The General Secretary Rev. M. Azariah informed the members of the passing into the glory of :

- (a) Rt. Rev. J. Thangamuthu, Coimbatore on 7-2-87
- (b) Rt. Rev. M. M. John (Retd. MKD) on 26-2-87

The moderator spoke about the Bishops and also informed the members about the tragic train accident that had taken place in Ariyalur, near Trichy on 15th March in which about 25 people had lost their lives and many more who were injured.

The members stood in silence for a minute and the Deputy Moderator Bishop Victor Premasagar offered prayer.

Some of the highlights of the discussion concerned issues dealing with the priorities and the VECOM Project. It is a matter of joy to note that all the CSI-RMC members evinced keen interest in all the programmes envisaged by the church, in particular the VELCOM project.

—Editor

Mrs. Daisy Gopalaratnam— 70 Years Young!

This was the response given by Mrs. Daisy Gopalaratnam, the former General Secretary of C.S.I. Synod, at the felicitations arranged to celebrate her 70th birthday.

Looking back, the one fact that stands out as very significant is—the Lord called me to responsibilities which I never wanted or aspired for or for which I was in the least qualified. Neither did I know the full implications of the positions that were laid on my shoulders, nor did I have the know-how to do them. I learnt to do things the hard way—it was sweat and hard work, research into the past, discussion with knowledgeable people and extensive reading that many times made my three boys frequently make fun of me saying, what are you slaving like this for? But, then, I could feel the hands of a Higher Power, drawing me, sustaining me, enlightening me, steadying me to stand up and speak, take decisions and do the things that ought to be done in every situation. Commitment and sustained labour was the order of the day. It marvelled me then, and still keeps me marvelling, at the abundant Grace that gripped and upheld me throughout my life.

The person who gave me the greatest encouragement in all aspects of my work was my husband. He was a unique person, from an orthodox Hindu home, who became a Christian to marry me. He was most generous in his understanding of people. His forgiving spirit, willingness to help others at all times, his emotional stability, formed a source of great strength to me and to his friends. He taught me how to co-operate with the inevitable and to turn every seeming defeat into a moral victory. His equanimity at the most trying circumstances was amazing.

When Bishop Newbigin brought me into the service of the Church, he along with the then Moderator Bishop Solomon of Dornakal, and later Moderator Bishop Gnanadason and Moderator Bishop Ananda Rao

Samuel and Bishop Ambalavanar and Mr. Chandy Jacob and my brother Victor Royappa of Christukula Ashram left their gentle but strong touches on me and my work, with their extraordinary wit and humour, advice, sincerity, sagacity and diplomacy. They helped me to grow up into a responsible worker with calm balance and cheerfulness, in spite of odds of varied kinds.

The greatest and all-pervading school to which I went was the Church of South India. What a wealth of experience and what an opportunity to serve the congregations at large. Each step was a step that I dared not take alone, and each step a deepening into faith and trust in Jesus. I was aware of my emotional and intellectual inadequacy. But many astounding things happened. The training I had in my private and public life as a servant of the community and as an Hony. Presidency Magistrate of the Juvenile Courts and the high and cordial contacts that came through them formed the spring-board to actions, which I presume were divinely directed. Prayer was the only way and answer in many a crisis.

Two months after I became General Secretary, I had to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the CSI in a big way. The Synod Office became a beehive of activity, and thereafter work expanded from 1973 onwards in leaps and bounds. The budget of the CSI in these days was just Rs. 50,000. Within a few years, the work expanded so much, that it rose to 50 lakhs and more.

What was most challenging in the nine years of my work in the CSI was the importance given to lay participation in the affairs of the Church and its varied functions. A certain perfect neutrality was established at the Synod level and this neutrality led to greater acceptance at all levels. The trend towards youth and

This was the talk delivered by her at the felicitations arranged to Celebrate Mrs. Daisy.

women and lay people being actively engaged in positive and creative work in the Church increased tremendously. The Synod made resolutions for the representation of women and youth at all levels of the Church structure and this gave a fillip to the expansion of the work of Women's fellowship, which came out with creative and innovative programmes of development of women, particularly in rural areas. Women's participation at all levels became visible and it has come to stay. Discussion on ordination of women was initiated throughout the CSI and the Constitution was amended twice to pave the way for final culmination two years ago.

It was a hectic period of establishing new relations with the world church and strengthening the old historical relationships of the CSI. Building bridges within the CSI, 22 diocese for better understanding and management and expansion of evangelisation and participation of the congregations in social evangelisation was a new phase of action pursued.

Union negotiations with the Lutheran Church was renewed once again and cordial relationships were established. When the Lutheran Churches in Andhra

Pradesh had problems, they asked the CSI and its leaders to mediate.

In the International field, the most memorable event was the Thanksgiving and Dedication Service of the Council for World Mission that is the reconstituted old London Mission Society on Monday the 18th July 1977, at the City Temple, London. Here the first coloured person and an Asian Woman was installed as the Councils' first Chairman. The CSI had the unique honour to lend its General Secretary for this work.

Twenty-four years ago, I asked God, why he took my husband away. There was no answer to that 'why'. I was blinded by agony, I still clung on to Him in faith. In 1985, when the impossible illness struck me, I never asked why; because He was there, right in the middle of all my pain and suffering. But when Rabi was snatched away in the prime of life, I was staggered beyond measure. Absolute surrender was my answer and still is. St. Paul in his 2nd letter to the Corinthians (Chap. 4:89) says, 'Hard pressed on every side, we are never hemmed in; bewildered, we are never at our wits end; hunted, we are never abandoned to our fate; struck down, we are not left to die'. It is only the living Christ within, who keeps us safe'.

SET US FREE TO LIVE FOR OTHERS

by Peter & Dorathy Millar; pp. 77; Price Rs. 6

The Rev. Peter Millar and Dorathy Millar are well known in Madras because of their long association with the Madras Diocese. Rev. Millar was the pastor of St. Andrew's Kirk for several years and is now the pastor of St. Mary's. This book brings together a lifetime of spiritual experience gained personally and through pastoral work in India.

The central theme is living a spirit-filled, Christ-oriented life—a life which shows practically the love and compassion that Christ showed when he walked on this earth. To spell out this theme, the book is variegated with articles, poems, prayers, excerpts and adaptations of different kinds. Again and again we are enjoined to show love to the oppressed and the

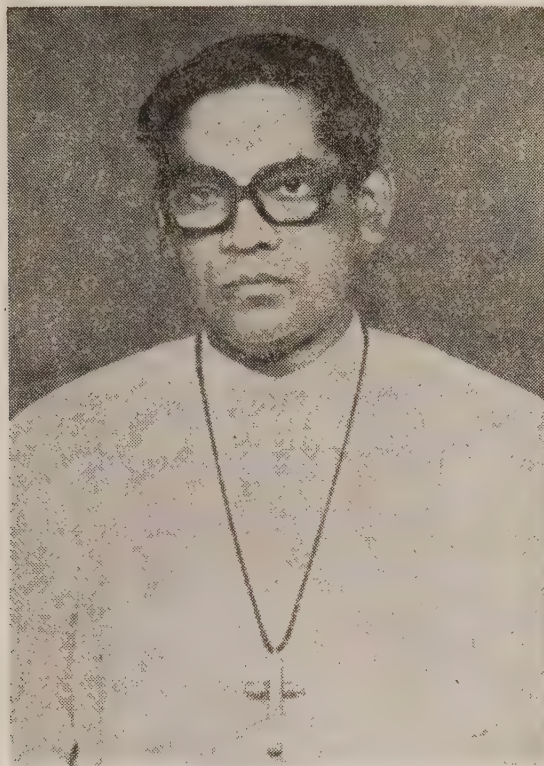
downtrodden, the less fortunate and the needy; to resist evil and to pursue good in every-way.

This book can be read as a whole and also used as a daily-reading each chapter gives evidence of the wonderful way in which the Spirit can work if people make that extra commitment. The Biblical verses used so choicely sets forth in a clear and simple manner the kind of commitment Christ requires of us. Penetrating and provocative, this book will beautifully guide us in our daily walk with Christ. It is a must for every Christian home.

Review by
—PURNIMA
C.L.S., Madras

NEWS FROM THE DIOCESES

COIMBATORE DIOCESE



BISHOP J. THANGAMUTHU

A TRIBUTE

DR. J. CHANDRA MOHAN*

The gloom and sorrow that descended upon the members of his family, the CSI Coimbatore Diocese and the community at large at the sad and sudden demise of their beloved one and revered Bishop in the early hours of Sunday the 8th February 1987 will never fade for quite some time as Rt. Rev. J. Thangamuthu was a generous kind and noble person who endeared himself to everyone as a true servant of God. The void created is not easy to fill up. The great contributions he had made to the development and progress of the Diocese in different

aspects both spiritual and otherwise will ever be gratefully remembered.

He hailed from Kanchikoil a remote village in Periyar District of Tamil Nadu where early Christian Missionary Work was started by the London Missionary Society more than hundred years ago. He had his early schooling in the Poppley LMS Elementary School in his village and later at Erode. He passed his SSLC Examination with distinction securing centum in Mathematics and first rank in the District. This was the beginning of his brilliant academic career. He was awarded the LMS scholarship for his higher studies. He took his B.A. Degree in Mathematics from the Madras Christian College, Tambaram, B.T. from Meston College, Madras and B.D. from the United Theological College, Bangalore. He was recipient of the coveted Gold Medal for being the best student in the B.A. class at the Madras Christian College,

* Dr. Chandra Mohan is Emeritus Scientist (ICAR), Tamil Nadu Agrl. University, Coimbatore.

Tambaram and a distinguished Hebrew scholar at the UTC Bangalore.

Bishop Thangamuthu started his vocational career as a school master and was soon called to God's Ministry and ordained as a priest in 1958. After serving as Presbyter in various rural and Urban pastorates for 14 years he was consecrated on 18th December 1972 and he faithfully served God and man as Bishop of the CSI Coimbatore Diocese for the past 15 years. It was but a Providential coincidence that he became Bishop in 1972 exactly one hundred years after Christianity was brought to his village by LMS Missionaries in 1872. He was an embodiment of kindness, large-heartedness, love and patience. His concern for the poor and under-privileged was surpassed only by his singleminded devotion and total dedication to worthy causes dear to his heart. His transparent loyalty and steadfast adherence to the CSI doctrine earned him respect from every quarter. He never compromised on matters of religious principles and beliefs. At the same time he had the knack of getting on well with everyone. He had also an admirable administrative ability. All these sterling qualities earned him the confidence of the earlier Bishops of Coimbatore Diocese and the CSI Moderator. And naturally he was the first choice as the Bishop's commissary or the Moderator's commissary whenever the Bishop in the Diocese was away or the neighbouring Diocese was without a bishop. He had worked in various capacities in the Diocese as a teacher, pastor, Manager of schools, correspondent of institutions, Secretary of the Diocese, Chairman of different standing and other committees, boards etc. The distinctive traits of his administration were his deep sense of justice and fairplay. Christian charity without malice or hatred reigned supreme. His was an 'administration without tears.'

Bishop Thangamuthu was also a man of passion and sympathy. He knew by name the members of the congregations even in the remote villages. Meeting them and helping them spiritually and otherwise were his prime tasks till the end of his life. Humility, austerity and simplicity were the hall-marks of his personality. His ministry was essentially a pastoral one. He was a real shepherd as a caring bishop guiding the flocks with kindness and tender care. He insisted that confirmation of young people should be held at least once a year in each pastorate as a result of which a large number came to God in full communion. He was a great promoter of theological education and encouraged Bible studies, retreats and youth get-togethers as frequently as possible. The out-reach programmes of Evangelism and Gospel work received his special attention. He was instrumental in organising many village congregations and constructing many village Church buildings. Youth activities and Sunday school work were very dear to his heart. He had a unique way of conducting conferences, councils and committee meetings by diffusing difficult situations when members' passions arose over controversial matters by his persuasive character to arrive at a consensus. His calm, cool and collected nature was key to his success. He was not only keen to protect the property of the Diocese but also make it more productive by putting up commercial complexes wherever possible to augment the finances of the Diocese. He was responsible for starting and upgrading many institutions in the Diocese such as schools, Polytechnic, crèches, homes for the aged, handicapped and mentally retarded, Secretarial Training Centre, schools of crafts etc. He had many more plans for projects and programmes in the Diocese but alas he will not be with us to see them completed.

Bishop Thangamuthu's significant contribution to the CSI Synod was no less impressive. He was Chairman of many councils and departments of the Synod such as Mission and Evangelism, Healing, Relief and Development, Technical and Vocational Training etc. and his work will ever be remembered with gratitude. He had also made many trips abroad in the cause of God's ministry and visited Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, U.K., and other European countries. He was not a demanding person. He sacrificed his own and his family's interests for the sake of the Diocese although he was a family oriented man, very much attached to his family. He was a man of honesty and integrity. He was an amiable person with Godliness and wisdom. He was indeed a great personality of many dimensions. His untimely death has cut short a most blessed and fruitful Ministry. We all know that he has been used abundantly by God. Let us give thanks to God for his life and work. Although we miss him we believe that he is in the presence of his Lord and Saviour whom he loved and tried to follow. This thought only can give comfort and solace to the bereaved family consisting of his wife Mrs. Rajamani Thangamuthu and four children. May God give them strength to suffer this loss. Let us also pray to God that the Coimbatore Diocese may gain strength and courage to face the challenges ahead with inspiration and confidence.

MADHYA KERALA DIOCESE



BISHOP JOHN

A TRIBUTE

PROF. T. P. MATHEW
Kottayam

Bishop John who had sixteen years of glorious ministry as a Bishop in Madhya Kerala Diocese passed away on the morning of 27th February. He was 78 and is survived by his wife Mariamma and three sons. Born in the Matteethara family at Olessa he was educated at C.M.S. High School, Mallapally and C.M.S. College, Kottayam. Graduated from the Madras Christian College he took

B.D. from Bishop's College and M.Th. from Wycliffe College, Toronto. Later the same College honoured him with a doctorate. From the time of his ordination as Deacon in 1935 his creative energy and abilities were to make their mark on the Church wherever he was. He served as a Pastor in many places before he was consecrated Bishop on May 6, 1958 on the death of Bishop C. K. Jacob.

During his Episcopate the Diocese registered many-sided growth. New church buildings were erected and old ones renovated. A training College, an Arts and Science College were set up besides many other educational institutions. A number of hospitals, hostels and Crèches were established for the benefit of the backward classes in the Church. The rural development schemes and Social Welfare Activities under the auspices of the Socio-Economic Development Society and Backward People's Development Corporation are standing testimony of his efforts to uplift the downtrodden.

He was a Commander who added a sweet grace to his powerful authority and therefore was obeyed with respect, even by those who disagreed with him. Once he had made a decision he acted on it. When faced with adversities he was calm and confident. A widely travelled cleric,

Bishop John was well known for his interest in singing and sports. He also had a subtle sense of humour.

The body clothed in Episcopal robes was moved to the Olessa Parish Church on Sunday morning and after a short service it was taken in procession to the Cathedral at Kottayam where the last service was led by Rt. Rev. M. C. Mani, Most Rev. I. Jesudasan, Moderator, Church of South India, Most Rev. Alexander Mar Thoma, Metropolitan, Rt. Rev. K. C. Seth and Bishop Mar Aprem gave short addresses. After the service in the Church there was a funeral procession along the main streets of Kottayam in which choirs from neighbouring churches Diocesan and other clergy and hundreds of people participated. It was a glorious manifestation of the love and respect in which he was held by all sections of the people. The Coffin was carried to the grave by the Clergy and was placed outside the chancel of the Cathedral on the south-east side in the presence of a huge crowd.

The Diocese thanked God for this great Bishop in a memorial service on 14th February held in the C.S.I. Cathedral in which V. Rev. K. K. Thariyan delivered an address highlighting the life and witness of Bishop John in the Diocese.

C.L.S. FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

1. **The Hilt and the Sword**
by S. P. Adinarayan
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by Paulos Mar Gregorios
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by N. C. Sargant
4. **Biblical Hermeneutics**
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World Vision of India in a professional Christian organisation involved in Community Development, Relief work and Child care. The Head Office is at Madras, with Sub-Offices in Delhi, Bhubaneshwar, Dimapur, Pune, Hyderabad and Madras.

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Age : Around 45 years.

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Qualification : A strong finance background either as ACA, ACS or similar qualification with experience related to senior level financial administration.

Age : Around 45 years.

3. ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION (Madras)

The person will be responsible for planning and implementing all financial policies and administrative procedures.

Qualification : A Chartered Account and or equivalent with adequate senior level experience to handle the diversity of the functional requirements.

Age : 35 to 40 years

4. ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR PARTNERSHIP SERVICES (Madras)

The person will be handling Sponsor Relations, designing Projects, communications and Fund Raising within India.

Qualification : Preferably specialised in Marketing/Public Relations/Communications at the Postgraduate level. He should possess strong leadership qualities.

Age : Around 45 years.

5. ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR OPERATIONS (Madras)

The person will be responsible for planning, co-ordinating and controlling various development Projects, through the Sub-Offices dispersed in North India.

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The incumbent is responsible for Public Relations, meeting top level media personnel and liaise with Projects and Support Countries.

Qualification : Postgraduate in Mass Communication/Public Relations.

Age : Around 30 years.

7. MANAGER, SUB-OFFICE (Delhi)

The job involves managing various projects through the Area Co-ordinators and liaise with Church leaders for further ministry involvement.

Qualification : Postgraduate in Social Science/Agriculture

Age : Around 30 years.

In addition to the above, vacancies exist in the Middle Management and Junior Management posts all over India in departments relating to Finance, Training, Internal Audit and Operations.

Interested candidates may apply with complete bio-data and a passport size photograph stating qualification, experience, salary drawn and expected to :

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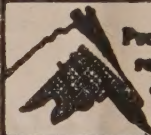
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